

OBITUARIES

LT GEN MAHMUD UL HASSAN HI (M) SBT, SI (M), TI (M) (1925 - 2019)

He passed away on 26th January, 2019, after a brief illness. He was 93 years of age. Mahmud ul Hassan was an institution. He retired from Pakistan Army in July 1988. He was a passionate surgeon, a brilliant teacher, mentor, orator, poet and prose writer. He had immense command over English language. He had the rare combination of a surgeon's healing hand and a hand that also held the pen and wrote brilliantly capturing the flow of his poetic and scientific thoughts and ideas. He had deep empathy, humility and compassion for fellow beings.



He was born on 17th July 1925, in the town of Aimanabad Gujranwala, Pakistan. His father was a clerk in a civil department. He passed Matriculation with high distinction from Islamia High School, Ferozepur. He did his FSc in 1942 from Islamia College Lahore. He then joined the King Edward Medical College which was the only medical college in Lahore at that time. He graduated in 1947, six months prior to partition. He won the 'Southerland Memorial gold medal' in Medicine, which was the only medal being awarded during medical school. He was passionate about Medicine and wanted to join the same for house job, but was strongly advised against it by Prof Ramzan Ali Syed. Consequently he withdrew his application and reapplied for house job in Surgery, for which he was immediately selected. He worked with eminent surgeons of the time, like Prof Ameer ud din and Prof Riaz e Qadeer. There were treating loads of injured and receiving dead arriving from Amritser. He stayed in the hospital day and night, and worked relentlessly, operating upon the wounded migrants. After house job, he was appointed Commanding Medical Officer (CMO), which he found to be a

comparatively relaxed placement. There he took permission to continue Surgery in addition to performing CMO duties and also imbibing extra skills as well like anesthesia technique during the same period.

He then joined the Pak Army Medical Corps (PAMC) later known as Army Medical College (AMC). He was posted in Field Ambulance Tararkhel, Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK). There was a small operation theatre where he operated to his heart's content, even though he was not a classified surgeon. A year later he was posted to Combined Military Hospital (CMH) Lahore. Seeing his surgical prowess, the ADMS Col M N Mahmud appointed him as a graded surgeon, even though grading was exclusively performed in CMH Rawalpindi. Few months later, he became the surgeon in CMH Lahore, as well as the Director of Artificial Limb Centre. At a very young age and after a short span of service he was promoted to the rank of Major. At that time, there were only five senior surgical specialists in Armed Forces. He was inundated with work, but chose to do more and more; he apprenticed with Prof Samee who was a visiting gynaecologist from KEMC and learnt the art and science of gynaecological surgery, and started filling in for the gynaecologist when she was on leave.

Due to so many practical skills and experience, he became famous as "Hur fun Maula... (the Omnicompetent).

In 1953, he was posted to CMH Dera Nawab, which was a small hospital. Finding time on his hands, he started devouring his books on Surgery and passed MS Surgery meritoriously. At that time "Master of Surgery" (MS) and "Doctor of Medicine" (MD) Punjab University were the only higher post graduate degrees available in Pakistan, on the pattern of the British degrees from London and Edinburgh Universities, and were categorized in precedence over

the Royal College Fellow of the Royal College of Surgeons/Member of the Royal College of Physicians (FRCS/MRCP) qualifications. The qualification started in 1914 and till 1947 there were only 14 MDs (Punjab) and about the same number MS Punjab. It was a very comprehensive exam, called Master of Surgery (MS) /Doctor of Medicine (MD) Golden. His thesis received "High Commendation".

He was then awarded a deputation in Plastic Surgery in the Army Surgical Center in United States of America (USA). He was the first surgeon from Pakistan to be trained in plastic surgery. He made use of every opportunity to attend, observe and participate in any and every surgical procedure being conducted in the hospital, and was always either found in the operation theatre or in the library, and never left the hospital premises. After six months of training, he returned home and was posted in Pakistan Naval Ship (PNS) Shifa Karachi.

Few years later in 1961, he was sent to the United Kingdom (UK) for further specialist training. He passed the Fellowship of the Royal Colleges of Surgeons (FRCS) exam. He was heard telling his personal assistance (PA), not to forget to print MS qualification on his writing pad, as he had worked much harder for it. He returned in December 1962 and was posted to CMH Lahore, the second largest Military Hospital in Pakistan. He was promoted to the rank of Lt. Col. During the 1965 war, he was the only surgeon in the hospital. He held the fort with dedication, and worked day and night performing surgery on the wounded soldiers. He was later joined by a couple of surgeons from Mayo hospital. During a black out, a trolley carrying a patient ran over his foot, fracturing his metatarsal bones. He never reported sick and continued to work with a hugely swollen and painful foot.

In 1971, Col Mahmud Ul Hassan was posted to CMH Rawalpindi and the Armed Forces Medical College, now known as Armed Forces Post Graduate Medical Institute (AFGMI). When FCPS courses were started at the Armed Forces

Medical (AFM) College, besides teaching surgery he was made in charge of teaching clinical Anatomy to the FCPS Part 1 students. At that time, he was also posted at AFM College/ Military Hospital (MH) Rawalpindi and was in charge of the Fellow of College of Physicians and Surgeons Pakistan (FCPS) Part 1 course. During the FCPS courses, the officers (students) were asked to fill feedback forms regarding the assessment/performance of the teachers, and Col. Mahmud ul Hassan was voted the best teacher in clinical/surgical Anatomy.

He excelled in teaching, building clear concepts, and incorporating poetry into his lessons to illustrate and enhance understanding. He was an orator par excellence and mesmerized his audience.

During the 1971 war, he again remained busy day and night, performing emergency surgeries on injured soldiers evacuated from the front lines. Even in 1971, there were not many surgical specialists in the Armed Forces.

In 1976, when the Army Medical College was established, he taught clinical Anatomy and Surgery. He later on became the Head of Department of Surgery. Even when he attained the higher ranks of Major General and Lt. General, he continued as Head of the undergraduate surgical courses in addition to the post graduate teaching. After his retirement, he remained on the honorary teaching panel. Lt. Gen Ayub Khan was the Principal of the Army Medical College. He ordered that Lt. Gen Mahmud ul Hassan will remain the de facto Head of the Surgical Departments, even though there were others on papers as the Head of Surgery.

Lt. Gen Shaukat Hassan, the legendary chest surgeon, not only in Pakistan but also in the region and Middle East was the Director General of Surgery. He was the first to do close heart valve valvotomy and kidney transplant surgery in the country. Gen. Shaukat Hassan had immense liking for Major Gen. Mahmud ul Hassan and Gen. Mahmud ul Hassan had immense respect for General Shaukat Hassan. Under the

leadership of Gen. Shaukat Hassan, the duo enjoyed immense reputation and took surgery to great heights, not only in the Armed Forces but also in the country. In those days civilian non entitled patients not only from Pakistan but also from the Middle East and other countries sought treatment at CMH/PEMH Rawalpindi.

He was a man of letters. He published several books in Urdu poetry. He excelled in Urdu calligraphy. In his nineties, his hand was absolutely steady, excelling in writing Urdu with traditional pen and ink, and equally steady while performing surgery. He used to reply to my letters in traditional Urdu writing. He wrote his autobiography in Urdu. The Chief Editor of fortnightly magazine PULSE, Shaukat Ali Jawed published a comprehensive review in the magazine.

He was honest to a fault. On his retirement, President General Zia ul Haq offered him the job of the "Principal of the Army Medical College". Lt. Gen Peer Dad, the Military Secretary met Gen. Mahmud ul Hassan to convey the President's offer. Gen. Mahmud ul Hassan replied that it would be disastrous for the college as he had no experience in administration. Even his ward and operation theatre administration had always been done by his subordinates, and he wrote on the

file and declined the offer.

Gen. Zia ul Haq was very fond of Gen. Mahmud ul Hassan, and would often request him to recite naats and listened intently. When Gen Zia needed surgery, he opted for Gen Mahmud ul Hassan to do his operation, even though he had the resource and entitlement to proceed abroad.

He lost his wife due to complications of diabetes mellitus ten years ago. He remained in emotional turmoil, and became a recluse, not attending gatherings of his interest like mus-hairas. He suffered from cancer of larynx and after a brief illness passed away.

He leaves behind three children. His son, former Professor of Surgery at Rawalpindi Medical University, is currently working at Dubai, United Arab Emirates (UAE). His daughter is an Assistant Professor of Psychiatry at Rawalpindi Medical University (RMU), and her husband Professor Fareed Minhas, an eminent Psychiatrist retired as head of the Institute of Psychiatry at the RMU. The department progressed a lot under his leadership. Another daughter, Col. Sabahat is retired from the Army Medical Corps and runs a Cosmetology clinic.

May his soul rest in peace!

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